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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to obtain some data on the opinions of college students about statements in the area of parent/child and parent/young people relationships, aspects of family life, and individual needs and values. Students in a research seminar prepared a scale of 25 opinion items. Students in 7 diverse undergraduate classes marked responses (agree, no opinion, disagree). Responses were analyzed in terms of sex, class standing, and major field of study. Responses to most of the items reflected a high degree of consensus among the entire sample. Analysis of the three personal variables showed that the subgroups did not differ appreciably in their responses. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (KM)

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OPINIONS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS ON PARENT/CHILD RELATIONS

(Abstract)

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Problem

College students are concerned with problems of human relations. Some of these problems involve parent/child relationships and conflicts of opinion on issues of mutual concern. This study was planned to yield some simple and hopefully representative data on the opinions of college students about statements in the broad area of parent/child and parent/young people relationships, aspects of family life, and individual needs and values. Some effort was made to obtain differences of opinion among several subgroups of college students and to interpret those differences in terms of personal and social factors, current social conditions, and traditional values.

Method

Students in the writer's research seminar in Central Washington State College (Fall Quarter, 1971) expressed considerable interest in exploring student opinions in this problem area. The students prepared a scale of 25 opinion items using standard procedures. During the quarter, college students in seven diverse undergraduate classes (N = 176) marked responses (Agree, No Opinion, Disagree) to the 25 items. The responses were analyzed in terms of sex, class standing, and major field of study.

Results

Responses to most of the 25 items reflected a high degree of consensus among the entire sample of students. Degree of consensus was defined as the percentage of students in the sample or a specific subgroup who marked the most frequent response of their own group to the item. For the entire sample, the degree of consensus among the 25 items varied from 93 per cent

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to 39 per cent (lower limit for three response categories about 33.3 per cent). For the entire sample, the median consensus figure was about 50 per cent. Eight of the 25 items had a consensus figure equal to or higher than 65 per cent for the entire sample of 176 students. (See Table 1).

In terms of the three personal variables (sex, class standing, major field of study), some analysis of degree of consensus and other response frequencies showed that the various subgroups of students did not differ appreciably in their responses to the items. (See Tables 2, 3, and 4).

Conclusions

Students in this sample at Central Washington State College tend to agree rather than disagree concerning their responses to the scale of 25 opinion items. Comparisons of subgroups of students based on the three personal variables yielded no major differences or trends in relative response frequencies for the items. Perhaps these results mean that most opinions of college students on parent/child relations vary in terms of pre-college personal and environmental factors. Furthermore, no single factor in the college situation may be sufficiently strong in itself to produce clear differences of opinions among college students on the topics suggested by these items.

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Opinion Statements

1. Most youths have no trouble communicating with their parents.
2. Parents expect children to conform to the parents' ideas.
3. Most parents today are sensitive to the needs and feelings of young people.
4. Most parents approve of their children's values and ideals.
5. Alienation of children from their parents is unnecessary.
6. In dealing with children in trouble, parents generally undermine the child's self concept.
7. Peer groups can teach values as effectively as parents.
8. Most individuals will become better parents than their own mother and father.
9. Parent-child relations become less important as the child matures.
10. Children should be freely allowed to voice their opinions concerning family affairs.
11. Communication between parents and children is largely a waste of time.
12. The best family is one in which both the mother and father act as co-heads.
13. The family exists today only because it is the socially accepted way of having and raising children.
14. College is an escape from the family.
15. Children become delinquent because of a shattering crisis in the home.
16. Most young people believe that their parents have not lived up to their own ideals.
17. A communal type setting would be much more effective for raising children than the single family units we have today.
18. Conditions in society today make family ties less meaningful.
19. Troubled youngsters find it nearly impossible to communicate their feelings in a normal way to adults.
20. The earlier a child leaves the family structure the better off he is.
21. Most parents adjust reasonably well to the changing times.
22. Parents who use strong discipline in the home will destroy the family.
23. Most young people accept their parents' values.
24. Due to great mobility in our society, the family structure is breaking down.
25. Close communication between parents and children is essential if they are to become mature adults.

TABLE 1

Degree of Response Consensus and Type of Response For 25 Items

Percentage of Response Consensus	Item Frequency	Item Number (Type of Response in Parenthesis)
90 - 94	2	10(A), 11(D)
85 - 89		
80 - 84		
75 - 79	3	1(D), 2(A), 20(D)
70 - 74	2	9(D), 19(A)
65 - 69	1	12(A)
60 - 64	3	4(D), 5(A), 13(D)
55 - 59	4	15(D), 17(D), 18(A), 24(A)
50 - 54	3	6(A), 7(A), 8(D)
45 - 49	4	3(D), 21(D), 22(D), 25(A)
40 - 44	2	14(D), 16(A)
35 - 39	1	23(A and D)
	25	

*"Agree" or "Disagree" as the response to the item statement.

TABLE 2

Percentages of "Agree" Responses to 25 Items by Sex
(N = 176)

Item Number	Sex		
	Males (N=92)	Females (N=84)	Total (N=176)
1.	16	12	14
2.	76	73	75
3.	37	37	37
4.	23	24	23
5.	67	61	64
6.	44	57	50
7.	58	50	54
8.	16	17	16
9.	29	12	21
10.	90	90	90
11.	04	01	03
12.	53	85	68
13.	31	23	27
14.	39	30	35
15.	20	15	18
16.	45	43	44
17.	21	18	19
18.	56	53	55
19.	77	70	74
20.	05	06	06
21.	35	41	37
22.	20	23	22
23.	35	43	39
24.	60	51	56
25.	51	46	49

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TABLE 3

Percentages of "Agree" Responses to 25 Items by Class Standing

(N = 176)

Item Number	Class Standing			
	Sophomores* (N=38)	Juniors (N=66)	Seniors (N=72)	Total
1.	18	17	10	14
2.	66	73	81	75
3.	53	38	38	37
4.	24	13	32	23
5.	50	70	67	64
6.	53	41	57	50
7.	37	59	58	54
8.	34	12	11	16
9.	18	15	28	21
10.	92	89	90	90
11.	08	02	01	03
12.	74	64	70	68
13.	31	27	24	27
14.	45	26	38	35
15.	16	14	22	18
16.	45	46	42	44
17.	16	26	15	19
18.	55	56	53	55
19.	82	70	74	74
20.	13	00	07	06
21.	42	41	33	37
22.	32	23	15	22
23.	39	40	38	39
24.	61	52	57	56
25.	50	54	43	49

* Includes 10 freshmen

TABLE 4

Percentages of "Agree" Responses to 25 Items by Major Field of Study

(N = 176)

Item Number	Major Field of Study			
	Humanities (N=48)	Natural Sciences (N=25)	Social Sciences (N=103)	Total
1.	13	24	12	14
2.	65	72	80	75
3.	42	64	38	37
4.	15	44	30	23
5.	62	72	63	64
6.	56	48	47	50
7.	33	48	55	54
8.	27	08	14	16
9.	25	28	17	21
10.	90	84	92	90
11.	06	04	01	03
12.	65	80	67	68
13.	23	32	28	27
14.	31	44	36	35
15.	10	36	17	18
16.	46	28	47	44
17.	12	24	23	19
18.	48	40	59	55
19.	72	68	76	74
20	04	08	06	06
21.	25	52	30	37
22.	23	20	22	22
23.	42	40	37	39
24.	52	60	55	56
25.	40	52	52	49